



DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

49 CFR Part 535

Medium- and Heavy-Duty Vehicle Fuel Efficiency Program

CFR Correction

In Title 49 of the Code of Federal Regulations, Parts 400 to 571, revised as of October 1, 2014, on page 146, §535.9 is reinstated to read as follows:

§535.9 Enforcement approach.

(a) *Compliance.* (1) NHTSA will assess compliance with fuel consumption standards each year, based upon EPA final verified data submitted to NHTSA for its heavy-duty vehicle fuel efficiency program established pursuant to 49 U.S.C. 32902(k). NHTSA may conduct verification testing throughout a given model year in order to validate data received from manufacturers and will discuss any potential issues with EPA and the manufacturer.

(2) Credit values in gallons are calculated based on the final CO₂ emissions and fuel consumption data submitted by manufacturers and verified/validated by EPA.

(3) NHTSA will verify a manufacturer's credit balance in each averaging set for each given model year. The average set balance is based upon the engines or vehicles performance above or below the applicable regulatory subcategory standards in each respective averaging set and any credits that are traded into or out of an averaging set during the model year.

(i) If the balance is positive, the manufacturer is designated as having a credit surplus.

(ii) If the balance is negative, the manufacturer is designated as having a credit deficit.

(4) NHTSA will provide written notification to the manufacturer that has a negative balance for any averaging set for each model year. The manufacturer will be required to confirm the negative balance and submit a plan indicating how it will allocate existing credits or earn, and/or acquire by trade credits, or else be liable for a civil penalty as determined in paragraph (b) of this section. The manufacturer must submit a plan within 60 days of receiving agency notification.

(5) Credit shortfall within an averaging set may be carried forward only three years, and if not offset by earned or traded credits, the manufacturer may be liable for a civil penalty as described in paragraph (b) of this section.

(6) Credit allocation plans received from a manufacturer will be reviewed and approved by NHTSA. NHTSA will approve a credit allocation plan unless it determines that the proposed credits are unavailable or that it is unlikely that the plan will result in the manufacturer earning sufficient credits to offset the subject credit shortfall. If a plan is approved, NHTSA will revise the respective manufacturer's credit account accordingly by identifying which existing or traded credits are being used to address the credit shortfall, or by identifying the manufacturer's plan to earn future credits for addressing the respective credit shortfall. If a plan is rejected, NHTSA will notify the respective manufacturer and request a

revised plan. The manufacturer must submit a revised plan within 14 days of receiving agency notification. The agency will provide a manufacturer one opportunity to submit a revised credit allocation plan before it initiates civil penalty proceedings.

(7) For purposes of this regulation, NHTSA will treat the use of future credits for compliance, as through a credit allocation plan, as a deferral of civil penalties for non-compliance with an applicable fuel consumption standard.

(8) If NHTSA receives and approves a manufacturer's credit allocation plan to earn future credits within the following three model years in order to comply with regulatory obligations, NHTSA will defer levying civil penalties for non-compliance until the date(s) when the manufacturer's approved plan indicates that credits will be earned or acquired to achieve compliance, and upon receiving confirmed CO₂ emissions and fuel consumption data from EPA. If the manufacturer fails to acquire or earn sufficient credits by the plan dates, NHTSA will initiate civil penalty proceedings.

(9) In the event that NHTSA fails to receive or is unable to approve a plan for a non-compliant manufacturer due to insufficiency or untimeliness, NHTSA may initiate civil penalty proceedings.

(10) In the event that a manufacturer fails to report accurate fuel consumption data for vehicles or engines covered under this rule, noncompliance will be assumed until corrected by submission of the required data, and NHTSA may initiate civil penalty proceedings.

(b) *Civil penalties.* (1) *Generally.* NHTSA may assess a civil penalty for any violation of this part under 49 U.S.C. 32902(k). This section states the procedures for assessing civil penalties for violations of §535.5. The provisions of 5 U.S.C. 554, 556, and 557 do not apply to any proceedings conducted pursuant to this section.

(2) *Initial determination of noncompliance.* An action for civil penalties is commenced by the execution of a Notice of Violation. A determination by NHTSA's Office of Enforcement of noncompliance with applicable fuel consumption standards utilizing the certified and reported CO₂ emissions and fuel consumption data provided by the Environmental Protection Agency as described in this part, and after considering all the flexibilities available under §535.7, underlies a Notice of Violation. If NHTSA Enforcement determines that a manufacturer's averaging set of vehicles or engines fails to comply with the applicable fuel consumption standard(s) by generating a credit shortfall, the chassis, vehicle or engine manufacturer, as relevant, shall be subject to a civil penalty.

(3) *Numbers of violations and maximum civil penalties.* Any violation shall constitute a separate violation with respect to each vehicle or engine within the applicable regulatory averaging set. The maximum civil penalty is not more than \$37,500.00 per vehicle or engine. The maximum civil penalty under this section for a related series of violations shall be determined by multiplying \$37,500.00 times the vehicle or engine production volume for the model year in question within the regulatory averaging set. NHTSA may adjust this civil penalty amount to account for inflation.

(4) *Factors for determining penalty amount.* In determining the amount of any civil penalty proposed to be assessed or assessed under this section, NHTSA shall take into account the gravity of the violation, the size of the violator's business, the violator's history of compliance with applicable fuel consumption standards, the actual fuel consumption performance related to the applicable standards, the estimated cost to comply with the regulation and applicable standards, the quantity of vehicles or engines not

complying, and the effect of the penalty on the violator's ability to continue in business. The "estimated cost to comply with the regulation and applicable standards," will be used to ensure that penalties for non-compliance will not be less than the cost of compliance.

(5) *NHTSA enforcement report of determination of non-compliance.* (i) If NHTSA Enforcement determines that a violation has occurred, NHTSA Enforcement may prepare a report and send the report to the NHTSA Chief Counsel.

(ii) The NHTSA Chief Counsel will review the report prepared by NHTSA Enforcement to determine if there is sufficient information to establish a likely violation.

(iii) If the Chief Counsel determines that a violation has likely occurred, the Chief Counsel may issue a Notice of Violation to the party.

(iv) If the Chief Counsel issues a Notice of Violation, he or she will prepare a case file with recommended actions. A record of any prior violations by the same party shall be forwarded with the case file.

(6) *Notice of violation.* (i) The Notice of Violation will contain the following information:

(A) The name and address of the party;

(B) The alleged violation(s) and the applicable fuel consumption standard(s) violated;

(C) The amount of the proposed penalty and basis for that amount;

(D) The place to which, and the manner in which, payment is to be made;

(E) A statement that the party may decline the Notice of Violation and that if the Notice of Violation is declined within 30 days of the date shown on the Notice of Violation, the party has the right to a hearing, if requested within 30 days of the date shown on the Notice of Violation, prior to a final assessment of a penalty by a Hearing Officer; and

(F) A statement that failure to either pay the proposed penalty or to decline the Notice of Violation and request a hearing within 30 days of the date shown on the Notice of Violation will result in a finding of violation by default and that NHTSA will proceed with the civil penalty in the amount proposed on the Notice of Violation without processing the violation under the hearing procedures set forth in this subpart.

(ii) The Notice of Violation may be delivered to the party by:

(A) Mailing to the party (certified mail is not required);

(B) Use of an overnight or express courier service; or

(C) Facsimile transmission or electronic mail (with or without attachments) to the party or an employee of the party.

(iii) At any time after the Notice of Violation is issued, NHTSA and the party may agree to reach a compromise on the payment amount.

(iv) Once a penalty amount is paid in full, a finding of "resolved with payment" will be entered into the case file.

(v) If the party agrees to pay the proposed penalty, but has not made payment within 30 days of the date shown on the Notice of Violation, NHTSA will enter a finding of violation by default in the matter and NHTSA will proceed with the civil penalty in the amount proposed on the Notice of Violation without processing the violation under the hearing procedures set forth in this subpart.

(vi) If within 30 days of the date shown on the Notice of Violation a party fails to pay the proposed penalty on the Notice of Violation, and fails to request a hearing, then NHTSA will enter a finding of violation by default in the case file, and will assess the civil penalty in the amount set forth

on the Notice of Violation without processing the violation under the hearing procedures set forth in this subpart.

(vii) NHTSA's order assessing the civil penalty following a party's default is a final agency action.

(7) *Hearing Officer.* (i) If a party timely requests a hearing after receiving a Notice of Violation, a Hearing Officer shall hear the case.

(ii) The Hearing Officer will be appointed by the NHTSA Administrator, and is solely responsible for the case referred to him or her. The Hearing Officer shall have no other responsibility, direct or supervisory, for the investigation of cases referred for the assessment of civil penalties. The Hearing Officer shall have no duties related to the light-duty fuel economy or medium- and heavy-duty fuel efficiency programs.

(iii) The Hearing Officer decides each case on the basis of the information before him or her.

(8) *Initiation of action before the Hearing Officer.* (i) After the Hearing Officer receives the case file from the Chief Counsel, the Hearing Officer notifies the party in writing of:

(A) The date, time, and location of the hearing and whether the hearing will be conducted telephonically or at the DOT Headquarters building in Washington, DC;

(B) The right to be represented at all stages of the proceeding by counsel as set forth in paragraph (b)(9) of this section;

(C) The right to a free copy of all written evidence in the case file.

(ii) On the request of a party, or at the Hearing Officer's direction, multiple proceedings may be consolidated if at any time it appears that such consolidation is necessary or desirable.

(9) *Counsel.* A party has the right to be represented at all stages of the proceeding by counsel. A party electing to be represented by counsel must notify the Hearing Officer of this election in writing, after which point the Hearing Officer will direct all further communications to that counsel. A party represented by counsel bears all of its own attorneys' fees and costs.

(10) *Hearing location and costs.* (i) Unless the party requests a hearing at which the party appears before the Hearing Officer in Washington, DC, the hearing may be held telephonically. In Washington, DC, the hearing is held at the headquarters of the U.S. Department of Transportation.

(ii) The Hearing Officer may transfer a case to another Hearing Officer at a party's request or at the Hearing Officer's direction.

(iii) A party is responsible for all fees and costs (including attorneys' fees and costs, and costs that may be associated with travel or accommodations) associated with attending a hearing.

(11) *Hearing procedures.* (i) There is no right to discovery in any proceedings conducted pursuant to this subpart.

(ii) The material in the case file pertinent to the issues to be determined by the Hearing Officer is presented by the Chief Counsel or his or her designee.

(iii) The Chief Counsel may supplement the case file with information prior to the hearing. A copy of such information will be provided to the party no later than 3 business days before the hearing.

(iv) At the close of the Chief Counsel's presentation of evidence, the party has the right to examine respond to and rebut material in the case file and other information presented by the Chief Counsel. In the case of witness testimony, both parties have the right of cross-examination.

(v) In receiving evidence, the Hearing Officer is not bound by strict rules of evidence. In evaluating the evidence presented, the Hearing Officer must give due consideration to the reliability and relevance of each item of evidence.

(vi) At the close of the party's presentation of evidence, the Hearing Officer may allow the introduction of rebuttal evidence that may be presented by the Chief Counsel.

(vii) The Hearing Officer may allow the party to respond to any rebuttal evidence submitted.

(viii) After the evidence in the case has been presented, the Chief Counsel and the party may present arguments on the issues in the case. The party may also request an opportunity to submit a written statement for consideration by the Hearing Officer and for further review. If granted, the Hearing Officer shall allow a reasonable time for submission of the statement and shall specify the date by which it must be received. If the statement is not received within the time prescribed, or within the limits of any extension of time granted by the Hearing Officer, it need not be considered by the Hearing Officer.

(ix) A verbatim transcript of the hearing will not normally be prepared. A party may, solely at its own expense, cause a verbatim transcript to be made. If a verbatim transcript is made, the party shall submit two copies to the Hearing Officer not later than 15 days after the hearing. The Hearing Officer shall include such transcript in the record.

(12) *Determination of violations and assessment of civil penalties.* (i) Not later than 30 days following the close of the hearing, the Hearing Officer shall issue a written decision on the Notice of Violation, based on the hearing record. This may be extended by the Hearing officer if the submissions by the Chief Counsel or the party are voluminous. The decision shall address each alleged violation, and may do so collectively. For each alleged violation, the decision shall find a violation or no violation and provide a basis for the finding. The decision shall set forth the basis for the Hearing Officer's assessment of a civil penalty, or decision not to assess a civil penalty. In determining the amount of the civil penalty, the gravity of the violation, the size of the violator's business, the violator's history of compliance with applicable fuel consumption standards, the actual fuel consumption performance related to the applicable standard, the estimated cost to comply with the regulation and applicable standard, the quantity of vehicles or engines not complying, and the effect of the penalty on the violator's ability to continue in business. The assessment of a civil penalty by the Hearing Officer shall be set forth in an accompanying final order. The Hearing Officer's written final order is a final agency action.

(ii) If the Hearing Officer assesses civil penalties in excess of \$1,000,000, the Hearing Officer's decision shall contain a statement advising the party of the right to an administrative appeal to the Administrator within a specified period of time. The party is advised that failure to submit an appeal within the prescribed time will bar its consideration and that failure to appeal on the basis of a particular issue will constitute a waiver of that issue in its appeal before the Administrator.

(iii) The filing of a timely and complete appeal to the Administrator of a Hearing Officer's order assessing a civil penalty shall suspend the operation of the Hearing Officer's penalty, which shall no longer be a final agency action.

(iv) There shall be no administrative appeals of civil penalties assessed by a Hearing Officer of less than \$1,000,000.

(13) *Appeals of civil penalties in excess of \$1,000,000.* (i) A party may appeal the Hearing Officer's order assessing civil penalties over \$1,000,000 to the Administrator within 21 days of the date of the issuance of the Hearing Officer's order.

(ii) The Administrator will review the decision of the Hearing Officer de novo, and may affirm the decision of the hearing officer and assess a civil penalty, or

(iii) The Administrator may:

(A) Modify a civil penalty;

(B) Rescind the Notice of Violation; or

(C) Remand the case back to the Hearing Officer for new or additional proceedings.

(iv) In the absence of a remand, the decision of the Administrator in an appeal is a final agency action.

(14) *Collection of assessed or compromised civil penalties.* (i) Payment of a civil penalty, whether assessed or compromised, shall be made by check, postal money order, or electronic transfer of funds, as provided in instructions by the agency. A payment of civil penalties shall not be considered a request for a hearing.

(ii) The party must remit payment of any assessed civil penalty to NHTSA within 30 days after receipt of the Hearing Officer's order assessing civil penalties, or, in the case of an appeal to the Administrator, within 30 days after receipt of the Administrator's decision on the appeal.

(iii) The party must remit payment of any compromised civil penalty to NHTSA on the date and under such terms and conditions as agreed to by the party and NHTSA. Failure to pay may result in NHTSA entering a finding of violation by default and assessing a civil penalty in the amount proposed in the Notice of Violation without processing the violation under the hearing procedures set forth in this part.

(c) *Changes in corporate ownership and control.* Manufacturers must inform NHTSA of corporate relationship changes to ensure that credit accounts are identified correctly and credits are assigned and allocated properly.

(1) In general, if two manufacturers merge in any way, they must inform NHTSA how they plan to merge their credit accounts. NHTSA will subsequently assess corporate fuel consumption and compliance status of the merged fleet instead of the original separate fleets.

(2) If a manufacturer divides or divests itself of a portion of its automobile manufacturing business, it must inform NHTSA how it plans to divide the manufacturer's credit holdings into two or more accounts. NHTSA will subsequently distribute holdings as directed by the manufacturer, subject to provision for reasonably anticipated compliance obligations.

(3) If a manufacturer is a successor to another manufacturer's business, it must inform NHTSA how it plans to allocate credits and resolve liabilities per 49 CFR part 534.

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